

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1234

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UNCLAS FRANKFURT 5671

EUCOM, USAREUR, USAFE FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER GIVES UP FRANKFURT CONSTITUENCY

REF: FRANKFURT 2437

1. FRANKFURT LORD MAYOR AND SOUTH HESSEN SPD DISTRICT CHAIRMAN RUDI ARNDT ANNOUNCED AUGUST 26 THAT DEFENSE MINISTER GEORG LEBER HAD INFORMED LOCAL PARTY LEADERS THE EVENING BEFORE THAT HE WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE A CANDIDATE FOR RENOMINATION FOR THE FRANKFURT-WEST CONSTITUENCY HE HAS REPRESENTED IN THE BUNDESTAG SINCE 1961. LEBER'S RENUNCIATION OF HIS DIRECT MANDATE REPORTEDLY FOLLOWED PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH NATIONAL SPD CHAIRMAN BRANDT, NATIONAL SPD SECRETARY BOERNER, AND A FOUR-HOUR TETE-A-TETE WITH ARNDT. BRANDT AND BOERNER, WHO IS ALSO NORTH HESSEN SPD DISTRICT CHAIRMAN, APPARENTLY ADVISED LEBER TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION WITHIN THE LEFTIST-CONTROLLED SOUTH HESSEN AREA. ARNDT AND FRANKFURT SPD CHAIRMAN FRED GEBHARDT HAVE PUBLICALLY PLEDGED THEIR SUPPORT TO PERMIT LEBER TO RETAIN THE TOP SPOT ON THE HESSEN-WIDE LIST OF RESERVE BUNDESTAG CANDIDATES, THUS VIRTUALLY ASSURING HIS REELECTION.

2. FRANKFURT LEFTIST AND FORMER JUSO NATIONAL CHAIRMAN KARSTEN
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VOIGT ONLY REMAINING DECLARED SPD CANDIDATE FOR LEBER'S OLD CON-

STITUENCY. BOUNDARIES HAVE BEEN REDRAWN SINCE 1972 ELECTIONS TO ENCOMPASS MORE CONSERVATIVE SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES WEST OF FRANKFURT, AND SOME SPD LEADERS IN THESE AREAS EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT LEBER SURRENDERED THE FIELD TO VOIGT. ONE OF THEM ANNOUNCED THAT THERE WOULD BE AT LEAST ONE OTHER CANDIDATE WHEN THE CONSTITUENCY SELECTS ITS NOMINEE FOR THE 1976 BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS.

3. COMMENT: SINCE HE BECAME DEFENSE MINISTER, LEBER HAS NEGLECTED HIS GRASSROOTS AND CONSTITUENCY WORK. LEFTIST DOMINATION OF FRANKFURT AND SOUTH HESSEN SPD ORGANS HAS INCREASED DURING THE PAST FOUR YEARS. LEBER'S DEFENSE OF US POLICIES IN VIETNAM WAS UNPOPULAR WITH PARTY LEADERS AND THE MAJORITY OF RANK AND FILE IN THIS AREA. IF VOIGT, WHO APPEARS TO HAVE BECOME MORE RESPONSIBLE SINCE HIS HEYDAY AS JUSO CHAIRMAN, DOES NOT GET LEBER'S FORMER SEAT, LEBER'S PROSPECTS OF HEADING THE SPD TICKET IN HESSEN WILL BE DIMINISHED. LEHMANN

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